

## **Not Stealing, But Laboring and Giving (Ephesians 4:28)**

- Paul's instruction to the Ephesians believers addressed: lying, anger, no stealing
- Based on who we are in Christ, He tells us what to put off and what to put on
- **Put off:** "stealing", **put on,** "let him labor", **the motivation:** "so that he can give"
- Regeneration does not = perfection, it signals God-ward growth into His likeness
- This is one of the key marks of a godless society – stealing was a way of life

### **I. Steal No Longer (4:28a)**

- 'Let him who steals, steal no longer' Present active continuous: it was still active
- Stealing is contrary to the character of God: "you shall not steal/covet" Ex 20
- We must see stealing in the light of God's holy character – or we will never hate it
- God – who is perfect love – gives "For God so loved the world that he gave"
- He withholds no good thing from those who love Him, He did not spare His Son...
- You can trace stealing back to the Garden: Satan whispered, you shall be like God
- Paul says, imitate Christ (5:1,2) Phil 2:5-8 "He did not cling to His glory"
- Just as lying is characteristic of Satan so, too, is stealing (John 10:10)

### **II. A Sanctified Call to Labor with Your Hands (4:28b)**

- Paul's instruction: Let him who steals...pray about it? No...steal no more
- What must he do? "**Let him labor**"- means: sweat, toil, to the point of exhaustion
- Christianity has always stood for the dignity of hard work/ dignity of labor
- Pragmatism, socialism, materialism: slackness, laziness and entitlement
- Christianity: God has my faculties to use them. Man is made in the image of God
- I am called to imitate God who is always at work (John 5:17; Prov 14:23)
- Scripture is clear: those who don't labor, don't eat (2 Thess 3:10; 1 Thess 4:11,12)

### **III. Laboring for the Blessing of Giving (4:28c)**

**"that he may have something to give him who has need."**

- To steal is to imitate Satan, to work and to give is to imitate God – I am a steward
- What do I have that has not been given to me? When God gives I must also give
- The thief "idolizes" himself. Christian: hold my possessions loosely, I live for Him
- Everything I have was made for His glory, this is the life of faith & love
- "...the life I live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved Me and gave Himself up for me." Gal 2:20